

FACEBOOK ADS COMING SOON ON INSTAGRAM: COMPANY SAYS IT INTENDS TO MERGE BOTH DATA'S, RAISING PRIVACY CONCERNS



Facebook's inroads into advertising could become a juggernaut that could crush all other media in its path. The language in its new terms of service, discreetly clarifies that, although for the moment they are focusing on product development, with the advancement of Instagram, prospects of their working with them are high – you don't have to be a rocket scientist to deduce what that means: It means they are going to advertise on Instagram. Instagram has increased its user-base to over a hundred million, over the last couple of years and it continues to add to that list everyday – it is too lucrative and a potential-filled area for advertisers, especially Facebook, which now owns it, to overlook. Instagram, as most know, is an easy uncomplicated life-sharing appliance for the iPhone, through which users can take photographs and share them with their friends across the world. There is no restriction on the numbers of photos that can be posted. Moreover, its posts can be shared on other social media as well. Facebook's announcement that they may combine user data from Instagram with the data they already have, without seeking voting approval from a certain percentage of users, could generate an amalgamated profile that's tricky to split and initiate privacy issues for users. Moreover, it could make users Instagram pictures a great source of information for its geo-located advertising, significantly increasing its capacity to target advertising, which plays such a major role in how it's ad business is run. By not allowing or not seeking users' votes, it is impacting and curtailing their ability to control their data on the site. Facebook acquired Instagram in September and the purchase brought along with it user data upwards of a 100 million registered Instagram users. Facebook has already told that it intends to unify and merge both the data's as it feels that it would assist them in improving their services. Analysts say that it is inevitable that internal data sharing is going to happen and it would be futile to challenge or doubt its predictability and inescapability. However, they say that it may not be as bad as many make it out to be, provided the users are informed how their data is going to be used and whether there are ways for them to opt-out of uses they feel impinges on their privacy concerns. This, they say, can be possible if companies like Facebook adopt a better disclosure policy, merely saying that the data on their sites can be mutually shared by its services and by its partners and colleagues, should not be enough. There should be explicit information, especially in areas where the sharing is something the user is not expecting and is unprepared for. A user will understand and obviously not object if the information is shared to improve customer service, but if it is for commercial benefits than the user has a right to know. Many a time it is found that these privacy controls are rather intricate and users normally do not want to navigate through the convoluted process. Companies should set default setting to ensure that the protection that is provided to the users is genuine and not a mere attempt to appease the antagonists and to avoid legal consequences. Companies will do well to realize that adopting a carefree cavalier attitude towards user's data can be detrimental in the long run and providing privacy controls will be beneficial in the long run. The companies will be surprised to find that the majority will not find their sharing objectionable and will willingly give their consent. Users are justified in wanting to know not only about who controls their data but also what they are going to do with it. Moreover, in all case the users should have the last say in whether they want their information shared or to be kept undisclosed.